

Echo

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Dale Farm eviction could take six weeks

11:40am Wednesday 1st December 2010

THE eviction of travellers from Dale Farm will happen next spring if Basildon Council and Essex Police get £13million funding.

The Echo can reveal the operation to clear the Crays Hill site could take up to six weeks if the expected levels of resistance from activists materialise.

The council had yet to commit to a date, but a report by leader Tony Ball to Thursday's full council meeting says: "Notwithstanding the costs issue, and assuming no further legal challenges that impede the council from proceeding, the site clearance at Dale Farm will commence in the spring."

Mr Ball's report hints that the council may have to bring in extra staff to run day-to-day services for several weeks.

The report said issues identified during evictions at the smaller Hovefields site in September and June, which cost £245,000, would be more significant at Dale Farm.

Mr Ball's report added: "The first is that of capacity of the organisation to manage this operation alongside delivering the council's other priorities.

"The internal resources required to manage the anticipated level of scrutiny during and after an operation such as at Dale Farm will have a significant impact on the normal operations of the council."

Requests for £10million from Essex Police and £3million from the council to fund the eviction are being considered by the Government. If rejected, a separate report will go before the full council over how to finance the operation, which could include borrowing cash.

Mr Ball said he hoped the travellers would move off before the eviction.

Grattan Puxon, a campaigner for the site, said traveller representatives asked to meet Mr Ball to discuss proposals for moving some families to Homes and Communities Agency land at Pound Lane, Laindon, but no date had been agreed.

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